

## UP THE AGE MARYLAND



### **Maryland youth have big dreams, but Big Tobacco has other plans.**

Each year the tobacco industry spends more than \$127 million in Maryland on marketing their products in part to entice the next generation of smokers. Big Tobacco knows that 95% of Maryland adult smokers smoked their first cigarette prior to age 21. Currently, there are over 26,800 Maryland high school students who are smokers and every year an additional 2200 Maryland youth under the age of 18 become daily smokers. At this rate 92,000 youth alive today will die prematurely from smoking.

**The legal age for sale of tobacco products in Maryland is 18, so how does this happen? How do underage smokers acquire cigarettes?** Underage smokers often turn to older friends and classmates as sources of cigarettes. Studies indicate that underage youth closer to age 18 are more likely to succeed in buying tobacco in stores. High school friends and peers of legal age are an important social source of tobacco for underage smokers. In addition, over 17% of underage smokers obtain their cigarettes through direct purchase from retailers. Less than 38% of underage smokers who attempted to purchase cigarettes from Maryland retailers were asked to show their photo ID. Furthermore, among adolescents not asked to show ID, 76.6% reported that they had not been refused in their attempt to purchase cigarettes.

**We can help reduce underage tobacco use by raising the minimum age of sale of tobacco products from 18 to 21.** Raising the age of sale laws promise to help reduce tobacco usage among high school-aged youth by reducing their access to tobacco products. The Institute of Medicine study predicts raising the national minimum age of sale of tobacco products from 18 to 21 could decrease the prevalence of smoking by 12% saving thousands of lives and millions of dollars. Raising the legal age of sale to 21 would not only make it more difficult for older youth to buy tobacco products, but would reduce the likelihood that a high school student will be of legal age and able to buy tobacco products for younger classmates or underage friends. Increasing the legal age of tobacco sales to 21 years old has administrative benefits as well. Currently, Maryland retailers need to know both the date of birth for alcohol sales and the date of birth for tobacco sales. ID checks for retailers would be simplified to checking photo ID for just one birth date.

#### Sources:

Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. *Monitoring Changing Tobacco Use Behaviors: 2000 - 2014*. Baltimore: Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Prevention and Health Promotion Administration, Primary Care and Community Health Bureau, Center for Tobacco Prevention and Control, May 2016.

Tobacco Control Legal Consortium, *Tobacco 21 Tips and Tools*, October 2016, Public Health Law Center at Mitchell Hamline School of Law, St. Paul, Minnesota.

Campaign For Tobacco Free Kids, *Toll of Tobacco in Maryland*, October 2017. Washington, DC.